

SOME OBSERVATIONS OF JASPER GORGE, VICTORIA RIVER DOWNS, N.T.

Keith and Lindsay Fisher

Four members of the Northern Territory Field Naturalists Club, Greg Wills, Grant Husband, and Keith and Lindsay Fisher, visited the Jasper Gorge area over the Easter period 20th-23rd April 1984. Jasper Gorge is situated 60km south of the Victoria Highway on the V.R.D. Station road. The road is formed gravel and passes through the gorge for its 10km length. A small camping area is situated at the eastern end alongside a billabong on Jasper Creek. The Jasper Gorge area is at present under consideration as a national park.

Three nights were spent at the gorge, spotlighting each night and walking along the gorge each day, downstream to Bottletree Waterhole and upstream to the road crossing of Jasper Creek. A small rubber dinghy was used on the billabong to observe the birdlife.

Evidence of aboriginal occupation was noted, stone and glass spearheads, as well as stone scrapers at scattered sites. Three rock art sites were found and a circular stone arrangement seen on the top of an escarpment.

BIRDS

Little Pied Cormorant	6 overflying campsite
Whistling Kite	2 patrolling Jasper Creek
Brown Goshawk	1 flying low along escarpment
Collared Sparrowhawk	2 soaring over top of escarpment
Brown Falcon	2 soaring over road by campsite
Australian Kestrel	1 in gorge
Peaceful Dove	Common in cleared areas, tracks and roads
Diamond Dove	2 disturbed in grass near Bottletree W/H
Bar-shouldered Dove	4 near Bottletree Waterhole
Crested Pigeon	2 flying along gorge road
White-quilled Rock Pigeon (subspecies <i>Petrophassa albipennis boothi</i>)	4 on escarpment 1km south of Bottletree Waterhole
Red-tailed Black Cockatoo	2 in Eucalypt south of Bottletree Waterhole
Galah	Several flocks flying around gorge
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	15 feeding near campsite
Red-collared Lorikeet	2 overflying campsite
Red-winged Parrot	Several parties of 3 to 4 around campsite
Cockatiel	1 flock of 30 at western end of gorge
Northern Rosella	Several pairs flying around campsite
Pheasant Coucal	1 in campsite
Southern Boobook	8 spotlighted on the gorge road

Masked Owl	1 spotlighted on the gorge road and 1 coming out of tree hollow. Identified by size and call — observed 5 minutes
Australian Owlet Nightjar	1 seen in car headlights on road
Spotted Nightjar	1 spotlighted on gorge road
Azure Kingfisher	1 seen flying along Jasper Creek
Blue-winged Kookaburra	Several along creek, calling at dusk and dawn
Rainbow Bee-cater	Common in open areas
Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	2 at western end of gorge
White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike	5 around campsite
White-winged Triller	1 near campsite
Rufous Whistler	6 eastern end of gorge
Grey Shrike-thrush	8 feeding in <i>Ficus leucotricha</i> (large leaf rock fig) at base of escarpment
Shining Flycatcher	2 pairs seen in <i>Pandanus aquaticus</i> alongside billabong at campsite
Northern Fantail	2 pairs seen alongside billabong at campsite
Willie Wagtail	3 alongside road in gorge
Grey-crowned Babbler	Several parties of 10-12 in and around campsite and along creek building nests/roosts
Variegated Wrens	1 male 3 female in escarpment 1km south of Bottletree Waterhole
Rcd-backed Fairy-wren	1 male 6 female in grass next to campsite
Weebill	2 in Melaleuca eastern end of gorge
White-throated Gerygone	2 in Melaleuca eastern end of gorge
Silver-crowned Friarbird	Common along Jasper Creek, feeding on <i>Xanthostemon paradoxus</i>
Little Friarbird	5 feeding with Silver-crowned Friarbirds
Blue-faced Honeyeater	7 overflying campsite
Whitc-gaped Honeyeater	4 feeding alongside creek at campsite
Yellow-tinted Honeyeater	2 seen in <i>Eucalyptus pruinosa</i> at western end of gorge
Brown Honeyeater	Common in all areas
Banded Honeyeater	2 near Bottletree Waterhole
Mistletoebird	1 at campsite
Striated Pardalote (Black-headed)	Common all along Jasper Creek
Crimson Finch	1 carrying nest material into <i>Pandanus aquaticus</i> on billabong near campsite
Double-barred Finch	2 around campsite, 2 attending nest containing 2 eggs at Bottletree Waterhole
Long-tailed Finch	Flock of 9 seen in grass alongside Jasper Creek
Olive-backed Oriole	2 seen in <i>Melaleuca leucadendron</i> on billabong near campsite

Great Bowerbird	Common around campsite, 2 bowers found on opposite side of road from campsite — contents included clear glass, grey-blue road metal chips (from campsite track), ring pulls, bleached bones and brown fruits
Australian Magpie Lark	Common alongside road
White-breasted Woodswallow	3 flying over campsite
Masked Woodswallow	Common along gorge road
Black-faced Woodswallow	12 flying over escarpment east end of gorge
Pied Butcherbird	Common alongside road, calling around camp
Torresian Crow	2 overflying campsite

REPTILES

<i>Crocodylus johnstonii</i> Freshwater Crocodile	Seven in Jasper Creek
<i>Gehyra australis</i> Northern Dtella	One on top of escarpment
<i>Gehyra nana</i>	Several under exfoliations of sandstone
<i>Heternotia</i> sp. Gecko	One active on track at night
<i>Lophognathus gilberti</i> Gilberts Dragon	Several on termite mounds at entrance to gorge
<i>Varanus mertensi</i> Mertens Water Monitor	Two on bank of Jasper Gorge
<i>Varanus mitchelli</i> Mitchells Water Monitor	Two on bank of Jasper Gorge near camp
<i>Cryptoblepharus megastictus</i>	Numerous on vertical rock faces.
<i>Ctenotus inornatus</i>	Several active amongst spinifex and on rocky slopes
<i>Ctenotus pantherinus</i>	One spotlighted at night under log amongst spinifex
<i>Morethia ruficauda</i> Fire-tail Skink	Numerous active on sandstone escarpment
<i>Notoscincus ornatus</i>	Active in grass tussocks in dry creek bed
<i>Dendrelaphis punctulatus</i> Golden Tree Snake	One at base of escarpment also sloughed skin

FROGS

<i>Limnodynastes ornatus</i> Ornate Burrowing Frog	Four active on track near camp.
<i>Litoria coplandi</i> Saxicoline Tree Frog	Several under rocks alongside creek during the day
<i>Litoria meiriana</i>	Numerous active on rocks around water
<i>Litoria woiwulumsensis</i>	One beside camp at Jasper Creek
<i>Megistolotis lignarius</i> Carpenter Frog	One under rock in dry creek bed near camp

FISH

Melanotaenia splendida australis Western Rainbowfish

Oxyeleotris lineolatus Sleepy Cod

Nematolosa erebi Bony Bream

Toxotes chatareus Archer Fish

Ambassis sp. Glass Fish

Amniataba percoides Black Striped Grunter

Leiopotherapon unicolour Spangled Perch

Eel Tailed Catfish — unidentified sp.

All fish observed in Jasper Creek.

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